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'Accused Army Impostor Claims He Works for CIA

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By MELANIE PARKMAN
Advertiser Staff Writer

DOTHAN — Alan Everett Goetsch Jr., charged with impersonating an Army captain at Fort Rucker, said Thursday the CIA sent him to the post to research two projects aimed at airlifting any remaining American prisoners of war out of southern Laos.

Also Thursday, assistant U.S. Attorney Charles Truncale confirmed that Goetsch had a commendation from the CIA for services he performed in 1982 among the papers authorities obtained after his arrest.

And in a related development, Lt. Roy Smith, spokesman for the Alabama Bureau of Investigation, said Thursday that Goetsch worked previously as a drug informant for the agency.

In an interview from the Houston County Jail Thursday, Goetsch, who is being held without bond, said he had been working on "Project Elephant," which involved a para-rescue concept to extract POWs and MIAs from southern Laos.

Goetsch, of Red Bluff, Calif., was arrested by the FBI April 10 at Fort Rucker after post officials began to suspect he was impersonating an Army captain.

Goetsch said he was directed by the CIA to research "Project Maya" and "Project Elephant," which involved medical relief assistance in Central America and extraction of American prisoners in Laos.

Goetsch said Fort Rucker was chosen as the site to conduct the undercover research because the projects were considered air operations, "and what better place to do the research than at the head of the Army aviation program."

Goetsch claims the research of the countries involved was necessary because the areas involve "unconventional warfare."

Concerning the CIA commendation,

Truncale confirmed Thursday that the FBI had obtained several documents from Goetsch's 201 military personnel file, including the certificate allegedly awarded by "someone purported to be in the CIA" for services rendered between April 15, 1982 and Dec. 15, 1982.

"I sent the CIA's legal counsel in Washington a letter advising them of Goetsch's claims, and I'm expecting to hear from them shortly," Truncale said.

He said he didn't know what the commendation was for.

Goetsch said he never knew specifically what the commendation was for because "the CIA issues commendations for just about anything — for work or experience with the agency," he said. "To my knowledge, they don't give specific reason or name to the commendation. They never name a project on it."

FBI special agents Dan Stankoski of Dothan and Will Ramsey of Mobile would neither confirm nor deny Wednesday that they had seized such a document from Goetsch.

Kathy Pherson, spokeswoman for the CIA, said Thursday "I don't know what this piece of paper is. Our legal counsel has been contacted by the U.S. Attorney's office in Alabama and has asked us to look into the whole situation."

Ms. Pherson did say that the CIA does have ways of awarding commendations "if somebody is doing work undercover, but generally they don't take the certificates with them. They remain in their 201 files."

She said she could not comment further on the case because she had not seen the document.

Goetsch said Thursday he feels he is being used by the CIA, and that now the organization "has come close to ruining my family," by failing to back his claim that he worked for the agency.

"It's easier to stick someone like me — to have me crucified," he said.

Goetsch said Thursday that he was an enlisted man in the Army from 1969-70, and that his interest in para-medical services are what led to his association with the CIA.

Goetsch contends that over the past five years a number of people approached him claiming they were associated with the CIA. He said they had official-looking identification and promised millions of dollars worth of financial support for his para-medical operations.

"I had no reason to believe otherwise," he said. "This started five years ago. My civil business goals met the needs of the guise or cover they were looking for."

Goetsch said he was originally interested in setting up a medical assistance and emergency medical services in Guatemala and Latin America.

Goetsch became an informant for the ABI following a brush with the law in Montana, according to Lt. Roy Smith, the ABI spokesman. Smith said ABI Agent Johnny Griffith signed a \$1,000 surety bond in May 1984 for Goetsch after he was arrested on a federal charge of lying on a bank loan application in Montana.

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